

## **6 FAH-5 H-130 PLANNING**

*(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)*  
*(Office of Origin: RM/ICASS)*

### **6 FAH-5 H-131 RATIONALE FOR PLANNING**

*(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)*  
*(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)*

- a. Simply stated, planning is needed to sustain the quality of posts abroad and to improve the quality of administrative support provided to critical diplomatic programs. Planning can:
  - (1) Provide the opportunity for involvement and establishment of consensus;
  - (2) Establish a sense of direction and sharper focus for the post;
  - (3) Ensure continuity, particularly needed in a post abroad;
  - (4) Cause change to take place when and where needed;
  - (5) Allow council to focus and concentrate all its resources toward ultimate goal of quality and excellence;
  - (6) Allow post to be proactive rather than reactive with change; and
  - (7) Align planning with the annual ICASS budget process.
- b. Many posts abroad face challenges to sustained long-term planning for one or more of several factors: shifting priorities among diplomatic programs, limited budget; frequent council and service-provider turnover; lack of understanding about long-range planning; etc.
- c. 6 FAH-5 Exhibit H-131 contains an overview of the reasons for planning, the elements of a strong plan, some questions to ask in assessing your readiness to plan, and information about planning models that have been effectively used by others.

### **6 FAH-5 H-132 THROUGH H-139 UNASSIGNED**

## **6 FAH-5 EXHIBIT H-131 PLANNING**

*(CT:ICASS-5; 07-21-2006)*

### **Six Reasons Why Councils Should Plan**

- Planning is the process by which a council exercises leadership.
- If a council knows where it wants to go, it is more likely to get there.
- The administrative platform is far too important to be left to chance.
- Maximum utilization of a community's resources is possible only through planning.
- Effective planning allows a council to develop and maintain a continuity of purpose.
- Adoption of a plan is conducive to council unity.

### **Planning**

#### **Rationale for Planning**

Simply stated, planning is needed to sustain the quality of ICASS improve the quality of life for personnel at posts abroad. Planning can:

- Provide the opportunity for involvement and establishment of consensus.
- Establish a sense of direction and sharper focus.
- Ensure continuity, particularly needed in ICASS.
- Cause change to take place when and where needed.
- Allow the council to focus and concentrate all its resources toward the ultimate goal of quality and excellence.
- Allow the council to be proactive rather than reactive with change.
- Align planning with the annual budget process.

Many councils face challenges to sustained long term planning for one or more of several factors: poor participation; limited budget; frequent turnover; lack of understanding about long-range planning.

This exhibit is not a “how-to” for strategic planning; that is beyond the scope of this work. These materials are intended to give you an overview of the reasons for planning, the elements of a strong plan, some questions to ask in assessing your readiness to plan, and information about planning models that have been used effectively by schools.

### **Precautions about Strategic Planning**

Effective strategic planning requires the combined efforts of committed people. Without commitment to the process, the resulting plan itself is greatly compromised. Timing and council readiness are very important; the mission must recognize a need for change and be willing to commit to change. Equally important is the need for resources for sustained implementation. Finally, planning and implementation are complex, and it is important to keep all stakeholders informed through regular, open channels of communication about important decisions and to offer opportunities for meaningful input whenever possible.

## **What Can Strategic Planning Accomplish?**

### **A Strategic Plan**

- Will enable the council to find a consensus that will give direction toward establishing a "preferred future."
- Allows the council and service providers to control change rather than to react to the need for change.
- Provides the council and service providers the opportunity to focus (or concentrate) all its resources toward the goals of quality and excellence.
- Enables the councils and service providers to stop being everything to everyone.
- Allows the service provider to make the day-to-day decisions in context of the "big picture."
- Provides council and service providers opportunity to work toward a common purpose.
- Allows critical program decisions to be made before the budget process begins.

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## Strategic Plans

- Just good business practice
- Empower you, the council, to set agenda
- Eliminate the extraneous
- Create the common ground (beliefs, mission, purpose)
- Cause change and improvement
- Require involvement of people
- Establish "rule of consensus"

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## Strategic Planning Timing and Readiness

Every important activity has a starting point. Before you undertake long-range planning, you will want to:

- Discuss the need for a strategic plan. If you do not have consensus that a plan is needed, you may want to defer planning until the council has had additional time for discussion and agreement. You might ask someone experienced in planning to conduct an information session for the council about planning.
- Determine your council's readiness for strategic planning. If your post is in the midst of significant transitions, it may not be the optimum time for a planning initiative. You will want to test the waters with key constituents and look at a variety of factors in determining the best time to start planning.

Some questions that will help you determine your readiness follow:

1. Is the strategic planning concept being pushed too hard and too fast by the council chair and perhaps others?
2. Do the council and service provider need more information about strategic planning?
3. Is the post large enough now, or will it be in the near future, to require strategic planning?
4. Does the council understand potential costs required to implement a strategic plan?
5. Is council turnover so rapid that the current council feels it cannot commit a future council to a plan?

6. Do people need additional time to study different models for strategic planning?
7. Are council members ready to participate on one or more strategic planning action teams, or do whatever committee work would be required to implement action plans?
8. Are council members and service providers ready to commit time to strategic planning and/or willing to accept consensus as a decision process when determining program needs?
9. Are the council members and service providers already engaged in time-consuming initiatives, such as technology, staff development, renovation and construction, etc.?

## **Questions to Guide Discussion about Timing and Readiness**

1. Why not adapt part of another post's plan and save time and perhaps money?
2. What attitudes might one expect from council members and service providers regarding strategic planning?
3. When is the council ready for strategic planning?
4. What is the downside to strategic planning?
5. How does one decide on what strategic planning model to use?
6. What costs should one expect in completing strategic plan?
7. What are the arguments for and against using an outside facilitator for strategic planning?
8. How should the strategic planning team be selected? What about the politics of selection?
9. Who should be a member of the strategic planning team?
10. What is the relationship between strategic planning and budget planning?
11. How might future council members and/or service providers react to an existing strategic plan?
12. Can a strategic plan ever be changed?
13. When all is said and done, is strategic planning worth the time and effort? Did it really make a difference?
14. Where can one obtain more information about strategic planning?

## **Planning to Plan: Sequence of Events**

1. Council meets to discuss goals.
2. Appoint committee to oversee planning to plan.
3. Establish planning committee work objectives.
4. Review degree of mission readiness for strategic planning.
5. Review strategic planning models.
6. Council approves strategic planning model for post.
7. Recommend time frame for strategic planning.
8. Discuss pro-con arguments in use of outside facilitator.
9. Seek to contract (if deemed necessary) an outside facilitator.
10. Establish date and time schedule.
11. Determine site for strategic planning discussions.
12. Recommend members for the strategic planning team.
13. Communicate strategic planning discipline to service providers and customers.
14. Determine table of contents for planning team research.
15. Monitor strategic planning effort.
16. Provide council with year-end summary report and recommendations for council.